

Statement from Lewis Schatten (Boardmember, CATRALA of CT, sole member manager of Cheap Auto Rental llc) on PB1007, March 7, 2011

Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me the time to speak today.

My name is Lewis Schatten and I am the member/manager of CHEAP AUTO RENTAL LLC, one of the last remaining independant car rental companies in the state of Connecticut. My company is headquartered in Wallingford with offices in Hamden, Branford, and West Haven, and sub-stations in Plainville and Waterbury. I operate approximately 200 vehicles, all of which are registered and taxed in Connecticut and have fifteen employees. Please note that I have no locations near an airport or a tourist destination.

When you think of rental cars, you probably think of flying into Florida or some other sunny vacation spot and renting a shiny new car for your vacation. The reality for most of my customers is entirely different. Most of my customers have either just had their own car break down, get stolen, or they have gotten involved in an accident. They would rather be driving their own car. Instead, they are renting an eight to ten year old used car from the least expensive place they could find. Instead of a fancy new ride for an enjoyable vacation, they are spending money they hadn't planned on spending to rent a car so that they can get to work, the grocery store, and to pick up their kids from school. The only thing that they have to look forward to at the end of the rental is paying out even more money for either having their existing vehicle repaired or replacing it with another one. Most of my customers are not wealthy people. A lot of the people I rent cars to are only one or two paychecks away from having their whole lives fall apart. Having the use of a car is a vital necessity to these people. One of the reasons that I have been able to stay in business at all is that I have been able to hold down costs and pass the savings along to the customers. I have not increased my rates in over ten years. It is already hard to look these people in the eye and tell them that they are paying a \$1.00/day tourism tariff when they are anything but tourists. I feel that adding another tax onto these people is equal to kicking them when they are already down.